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VIEWPOINT
Dr. Tilak Rawal



OPINION
Dipak Gyawali



FORUM
Arnaud Cauchaois

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FORTNIGHTLY

NEPAL-INDIA JSC MEET Power Trade Breakthrough

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NEPAL-INDIA RELATIONS
BREAKING BARRIERS



CHIEF'S CONCLAVE
IN RECOGNITION OF CONTRIBUTIONS



EU COMMISSIONER JUTTA URPILAINEN VISIT
BRIEF BUT MEANINGFUL

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IME Pay मा बिदेशबाट पठाएको
पैसा प्राप्त गर्दा पाउनुहोस् **रु. ५०१-** बोनस ।

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Notes From The Editor



These three cities in Nepal is a cold stones. It is great only in intrigue. With one who drinks water from cisterns, there is no wisdom, nor is there courage. There are only intrigues. My wish is to build my capital in Dahachwok. A King from the small state of Gorkha, he had witnessed the intrigues and low moral standards of the valley's Vardar. It spooked him. Although he said them in anger and frustration, the words of Nepal's founder, Prithivi Narayan Shah, in his Dibya Upadesh, are still relevant. In the last month, Nepal has received high-level visitors from all over the world, including India's Foreign Secretary Vinay Mohan Kwatra. Stories of intrigues dominated the positive outcomes.

Similarly, it was a historic and memorable event for Nepal because it was also a part of the highly revered spiritual event of Ayodhya, Rana Janmabhumi. Nepal offered a Saligram stone for the construction of the Rama and Sita statue in Ayodhya. The stone was chosen from the Holi River Kali Gandaki, which has many connections with the Ramayana. Two large stones taken from the river are millennia old and they had to travel hundreds of kilometers to reach their destinations. As millions of Hindu devotees from Nepal and India waved the stone with complete devotion, Kathmandu-based media did not notice. Similarly, Nepal-India foreign secretary-level talks led to a significant breakthrough in power trade. The Nepalese media was rife with conspiracy theories.

Similarly, the visit of USAID Administrator Samantha Power was extremely beneficial to Nepal's development. The visit of European Union Commissioner Jutta Urpilainen was also very significant. Even though we have several important issues to cover this week, we have decided to cover Nepal-India relations as a cover story following the visit of India's foreign secretary Vinay Mohan Kwatra. The visit of the EU's commissioner and the presidential elections are this week's other topics.

Keshab Poudel

Editor

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Going, Going, Gone



BY: HEMANG DIXIT

Many years ago, after I reached London for the first time, I saw at the Tottenham Court end of Oxford Street, a small shop frontage displaying various items with a SALE tag attached. At its side was another shop with a crowd of people within. Wondering what was happening; I too ventured in and saw an auctioneer at work. Holding an item in his hand, he described it eloquently and asked for bids starting with Pound One. Offers for the item were voiced from side to side and as silence ensued after a little while the man pronounced, 'Going, going, gone' and banged with a hammer the top of the table in front of him. After seeing and hearing all this for a while I suddenly found that I too had been 'bitten by the bug' or rather auction fever. I made a bid for an item that the man displayed. Someone in the crowd shouted his bid, then another and others. As the auctioneer said 'Any one top that', I made a hefty bid. There was silence for a couple of seconds and then his voice announced, 'Going, going, gone, to the gentleman in the duffle coat in the corner there.' I had been enthused, attracted and finally entrapped to obtain an item which I did not need. What to do? I had been made a sucker. Some 15 years later when I revisited the UK, I retraced my steps to the SALE shop and also the auction centre I saw that both were still functioning in the same manner and in full bloom!

Coming back to this thread I have realised that this has been going on in my whole life. At this old age of my life I, and many other Nepali simpletons like me were enchanted by the slogans, 'Never again' and 'NO, NOT AGAIN' as these were bandied about during our recent elections. We voted for the *Gathbandans* said to have a life of at least 15-20 years! Within a matter of days what were said to be almost permanent were torn apart by some unseen force and fell by the wayside. There was a gnashing and grinding of teeth. Our aged politicians who had been 'ruling the roost' with the expertise developed over seven decades had outsmarted their own compatriots with a masterly stroke once again. Our *Sukulgoondas*, well directed by their compatriots the carpetbaggers of *phoren* shores had once again been outwitted! Sadly as Plato has said, 'Those who are too smart to enter in politics are punished by those who are dumber.' We the plain dumb witted Nepalīs are in for years of hardships ahead. What Edward R Murrow foretold, 'A nation of sheep will soon have a government of wolves' has happened to us.

Coming now to the context of the 'No Not Again' one can look at the context of monarchy in Nepal. It was as I have written before. King Farouk of Egypt, who on being shunted out of the kingship in 1953 by Muhammad Naguib and Gamal Abdel Nasser leaders of the Free Officers Movement, made a remark for posterity. His subtle comment 'There are only five kings in the world, four in the pack of cards and one King of England' is uncanny. Subsequently Naguib became the first president of the Arab Republic of Egypt (*Misr*).

Cambodia is a country which has gone through a very chequered history. From French Colonial rule, monarchy, Khmer Rouge, communist regime, a state during the years from 1970 to 1993, when massive changes took place. Since then Cambodia is a kingdom again. The main player in all this is Norodom Sihanouk (1922-2012) who during the course of his life served both as PM and King of the country. N.Sihanouk was a multi-talented personality who during the course of his life, did as Shakespeare was 'A man who in his time plays many parts'. Being really loved by the people he was also referred to as: Samdech Euv meaning King Father. His parts ranged from being a movie maker, premier, king and refugee. His first rule was from 1941 to 1955. He abdicated to participate in elections and was succeeded by his father N. Saramit. After his father died he became King in 1960 but was ousted in 1970 and fled to China. He became king again in 1993 and served in this capacity till 2004 when he was succeeded by his son N. Sihamoni who is currently ruling Cambodia.

With the meetings, impending decisions and varied announcements, one wonders the fate of us common Nepalīs. One knows that one needs to learn to walk before one can run. Our current constitution was made without the consent of the people. In reality the feedback received from the people had been stuffed in the bags and cast aside without even being looked at. How can this be termed a People's Constitution when a handful of chosen coterie scuttled the whole process and passed it as per their interests? There is no doubt that the existing crop of leaders, especially those after 1990 are all of the same feathers and an inheritance which we need to clear straight away. They have paid no heed to the one and only rule that should have been uppermost in their minds and is that the policy which all must follow is same whichever party is in power. The bottom line is that national interest comes first.

The Rastriya Prajatantra Party's finally succeeded in making Prithvi Jayanti a national holiday as National Unity Day. The scheme to do away with homage to PNS, implemented by PM GPK in 1963 lasted for 16 years. Was it removal a pre-requisite for RPP joining the government? Head strong determination has brought this about. What about Nepal being a *Hindu Rastra* with a Hindu monarch? This is a big talking point in the House of Representatives. As we have not yet seen the ending of 'No Never' and 'Going, going, gone' can we ever hope that 'Coming, coming, welcome' is ever going to be a reality? William Shakespeare said, 'What a terrible era in which idiots govern the blind'. Are we unfortunate ones suffering thus?

The author is a retired medical doctor and writes fiction under the pen name of Mani Dixit also. Website: www.hdixit.org.np. Twitter: @manidixithd

NEWSNOTES

German Parliamentary Delegation Meets PM Prachanda
Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda' received a delegation from German-South Asian Parlia-



mentary Friendship Group led by Ms Renate Künast today.

According to PMO, discussion covered various facets of the bilateral cooperation to further strengthening Nepal-German relations.

Foreign Secretary Paudyal Discussed Various Facets Of Bilateral Cooperation With German Parliamentary Delegation

Foreign Secretary Bharat Raj Paudyal had a meeting with a delegation from German-South Asian Parliamentary Friendship Group led by Renate Künast today. Discussion covered various facets of bilateral cooperation



to further strengthening Nepal-German relations.

A German Parliamentarian Delegation Visits Nepal

South-Asian Parliamentary Delegation from the German Bundestag, the German House of Representatives, is on a four-day official visit to Nepal from 19 to 22 February 2023.

The six-member parliamentary delegation comprises of parliamentarian Renate Künast, Andreas Larem,

Paul Lehrieder, Ria Schröder, Dr. Malte Kaufmann and Dr. André Hahn.

"This visit after the pandemic will further strengthen parliamentary relations between Nepal and Germany, contributing to the long-standing bilateral friendship and cooperation that has lasted for more than 60 years," said Renate Künast, Head of the Delegation.

The delegation will discuss a wide range of topics, including economic transformation of Nepal, tourism promotion, Nepal's peace process and human rights, women empowerment, rules-based international order, agriculture and regional cooperation as well as German-Nepali development cooperation.

The members of the delegation met with Prime Minister of Nepal Pushpa Kamal Dahal, Speaker of the House of Representative Devraj Ghimire, Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister Bishnu Paudel, Minister for Agriculture and Livestock Development Jwala Kumari Sah and Foreign Secretary Bharat Raj Paudyal. The German parliamentary delegation also had an interaction program with members of the Federal Parliament of Nepal.



Besides the official meetings, the parliamentary delegation will also have an interaction with representatives of German Development Cooperation, German NGOs working in Nepal and human rights organisations. The Delegation also plans to visit ICIMOD Knowledge Park, Nepal Vocational Academy and the Nepal Secretariat of Skills and Training (NSST). A visit to the rich cultural heritage of Bhaktapur and Baudhanath is also planned during the four-day visit to Nepal.

French Ambassador Paid A Courtesy Call On PM Prachanda

Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda' received the French Ambassador to Nepal Gilles Bourbao.

According to Prime Minister's Office, discussions covered various facets of



the bilateral cooperation to further strengthen Nepal-France relations.

India Gifted 200 Pieces of Kidney Dialysis Machines To Nepal

India has handed over the 200 pieces of Kidney Dialysis Machines to the Nepal government.



In a ceremony, Indian Ambassador to Nepal Nabin Shrivastava handed over the machines to the Ministry for Health and Population Padam Giri.

According to Embassy of India's twitter, these are part of 200 KDMs that India is gifting Nepal to augment its health infrastructure

UN Organized A Panel Discussion On Protecting And Promoting Human Rights Of Youth In Migration

The United Nations in Nepal together with IOM, UNESCO, UNV and Directorate General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (DG ECHO) organized a panel discussion to bring forth the issues faced by youth in migration and advocate for protection issues to promote their human rights.

The panel discussion titled "Youth in Migration - Protecting and Promoting Human Rights" brought together representatives from UN agencies, EU, National Youth Council, Foreign Employment Board Secretariat, National Human Rights Commission, academia, and private sectors among others to understand ways to address the challenges faced by youth in countries of destination and delineate ways to promote safe, orderly, and dignified migration, securing human rights of the youth.

Evidence from various studies shows that youth migrant workers are particularly vulnerable to exploitation. They experience maltreatment by unscrupulous employers; and they suffer isolation, sub-standard working conditions, non-payment of wages, and the threat of being reported to the authorities and deported to their countries of origin.

Speaking at the event the, the UN Resident Coordinator a.i. Mr. Robert Kasca said "More than 2.1 million

Nepalese people are currently abroad for employment or education. Their remittances contribute to 25 % of Nepal's GDP. But this does not come without a price. Today, we are here to bring our partners together to discuss and identify how we can jointly protect and realise the human rights of migrants, particularly youngmigrants."

The half day event allowed for youth to discuss and share their experiences in relation to human rights and returnee or aspiring migrants.

"When I returned to Nepal from India during COVID-19 lockdown due to job loss, IOM supported me with re-integration that gave me hope. With the support, I was able to start a beauty parlor. It helped me to gain my economic independence. I would like to strongly request for reintegration support for the returnee migrants who are in need." shared Ms. Anju Bishwakarma, a Returnee Migrant from Province 1.

This panel discussion aimed to give a voice to the challenges face by youth while migrating to destination countries and pave a way forward to enable them to access their rights, both abroad and at home.

"National Youth Council is engaged in building skills of youth in support of private sectors. The unskilled



youth are vulnerable to exploitation, in the country and also in country of destination. Thus, we are focusing on increasing their skill and capacity and reducing their vulnerability to exploitation. We are seeking support and partnership with range of stakeholders in our effort to protect and promote human rights of youth." Said Mr. Ramakanta Sharma, Member Secretary, National Youth Council

This event was organized as part of 'Commemoration of the 75th Anniversary Year of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights' and part of the 'Effective case management by strengthening isolation centers and ground crossing points management for rapid response and preparedness against COVID-19' project funded by DG – ECHO.

Germany Supports Nepal With 1.5 Million COVID Vaccines Gthrough COVAX

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The vaccine support from Germany through the COVAX partnership will contribute to the Government of Nepal's efforts to continue vaccinating people across the country.

Germany has just handed over more than 1.5 mil-



lion doses of Pfizer-BioNTech's bivalent COVID-19 vaccine to Nepal through the COVAX Facility. The Ambassador of Germany to Nepal, Dr Thomas Prinz, presented the vaccines to the Honorable Minister for Health and Population Mr Padam Giri at the Ministry earlier today in the presence of UNICEF Representative to Nepal Ms Elke Wisch and WHO Representative to Nepal Dr. Rajesh Sambhajirao Pandav.

"From the beginning of this pandemic Germany has supported the people of Nepal and has advocated for multilateral solutions like COVAX and ACT-Accelerator. Vaccines are the key in the fight against this pandemic and I am delighted to hand over today vaccines that were invented in Germany. With this delivery the German support reaches more than 5.6 million Doses," said Ambassador Dr Prinz. "Nepal is one of the top 10 countries worldwide to receive vaccine support from Germany."

Although the number of COVID-19 infections in Nepal is relatively low at present, experts remain concerned about potential new surges in the days to come. So far, over 82 per cent of the total population has been vaccinated, with 9,083,976 having received booster shots (Until Feb 7 2023).

"In light of rising COVID-19 infections in different countries around the world, we are keen to continue administering booster shots and expand protection to more people across Nepal," said Honorable Minister for Health and Population Mr Padam Giri. "This generous assistance from Germany comes at a crucial time to support our vaccination efforts."

Germany was one of the founding members of the Country Coordinating Mechanism Access to COVID-19 Tools Accelerator (ACT-Accelerator) in April 2020 and re-

mains its second-largest donor, with contributions totalling 3.3 billion euro so far. Germany has donated and delivered approximately 120 million doses since the start of the pandemic – the majority of them through COVAX.

The COVAX Facility is part of the ACT-Accelerator, and brings together several key partners such as Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, WHO and UNICEF to ensure efficient and equitable global allocation of COVID-19 vaccines.

UNICEF Representative to Nepal Ms Elke Wisch thanked the Government and people of Germany for contributing these life-saving vaccines to Nepal. "Germany has been a generous partner in not just ensuring access to COVID-19 vaccines but also in supporting Nepal to procure cold-chain equipment to ensure safe delivery of these doses to communities," Wisch said.

UN Launched National Gender Equality Program

"Empowered Women, Prosperous Nepal" (Shashakta Mahila, Sambridhha Nepal) will contribute to the full realization of human rights and agency of Nepalese women, girls and people of diverse genders

The Government of Nepal, the Delegation of the European Union in Nepal and the United Nations launched a four-year joint programme to advance gender equality and contribute to the empowerment of women and girls to realize the national vision of a prosperous and happy Nepal (vision 2030).

Honourable Minister for Women, Children and Senior Citizens, Ms. Bhagwati Chaudhary, the Director for the Middle East, Asia and Pacific at the Directorate-General for International Partnerships of the European Commission, Mr Peteris Ustubs and Elke Wisch, UNICEF Representative to Nepal on behalf of the UN



Resident Coordinator and the UN team, jointly launched the programme at a ceremony held in Patan today. The event was attended by representatives from the Government of Nepal, Heads of agencies of the United Nations, Head of Missions/Ambassadors of development partners

and EU Member States, and civil society organizations.

“Empowering women is crucial for the prosperity of Nepal. In the 21st century, we must strive to eliminate discrimination against women and girls. We are honored to be a part of the collaborative effort between the EU and UN agencies towards this goal,” said Chaudhary, Honourable Minister for Women, Children and Senior Citizens.

The programme, titled “Empowered Women Prosperous Nepal” (Shashakta Mahila, Sambridhha Nepal) ultimately seeks to strengthen equal rights and opportunities for women and men by engaging with men and boys, families, and communities to exhibit more gender-equitable behaviors, as well as support for positive social and gender norms that promote Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment (GEWE), resulting in increased agency and voice of women and girls.

“Nepal is at a strategic crossroad- with a recent, strong and democratic constitution bringing a very ambitious reform to a federal system, and at the verge of graduating from Least Developed status. And these two important milestones for Nepal’s development rest on Nepal’s capacity to use its potential to the fullest, which means using all hands and all hearts to the betterment of the country. Nepal has not only the opportunity, but the necessity, to count on all of its people, including women and men in all their diversity to make these ambitions happen,” said Director Peteris Ustubs.

The programme aims at addressing the formal and informal barriers to development that women and girls face in Nepal. It will also acknowledge the intersecting vulnerabilities, formal and informal forces that combine to leave half of Nepal’s vital forces behind and ensure that women, men, girls, and boys, in all their diversity, have equal access to economic, labor, and social rights.

“Women and girls account for half of Nepal’s population and represent half of the country’s potential to realize a prosperous and happy Nepal! The Constitution of Nepal commits to equal opportunity and protection for women and girls. It will take a ‘whole of society’ approach – with government at all levels, civil society, private sector and development partners working together – to achieve this great aspiration.” said Ms Wisch. “With men and boys at the forefront to tackling the social norms that continue to drive discrimination against women and girls, and joining efforts to promote gender equality in their families and communities, together we can create a more inclusive and equal society.”

The program, with a total budget of US\$19.5 million, will be jointly implemented by four UN agencies (ILO, UNFPA, UNICEF, UN Women), in three provinces, namely Madhesh, Karnali and Sudurpaschim from 2023 to 2026 in collaboration with federal, provin-

cial and local governments. The programme has been designed following an in-depth situation analysis and extensive consultations with wide range of government bodies, civil society organizations and other stakeholders.

Scientists And Researchers Called For The Equal Participation And Leadership Of Women And Girls In Science

Scientists and researchers in Nepal have called for the equal participation and leadership of women and



girls in science and technology to address the greatest challenges facing Nepal today.

UNESCO and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) commemorated the 8th International Day for Women and Girls in Science, with a dialogue on, “Leadership of Women and Girls in Science”.

In Nepal, for every four men employed in professional, scientific and technical activities, there is only one woman. The lack of effective participation in STEM education and careers is not just a loss for women and girls, but a missed opportunity for the communities, and nations to find sustainable solutions to common problems.

Speaking at the event, Honorable Minister of Women, Children and Senior Citizens Bhagwati Chaudhary shared, “If given the opportunity, women are likely to thrive. We need to ensure that we have at least 33 per cent representation of women in all sectors including government bodies, development agencies, political representation and private sectors. The government needs to incorporate this in the policies and ensure its implementation, so that we have more women and girls in leadership.”

Navanita Sinha, Head of Office a.i. of UN Women Nepal shared, “I urge everyone to stand together, in our collective struggle to smash stereotypes, defy gender bias, and defeat discrimination that holds women and

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girls back in science.”

Michael Croft, the UNESCO Representative to Nepal added, “As we look around at our world, and see the discord and disharmony, we understand something is wrong, something is not in balance. We are missing the contribution and leadership of women and girls in so many areas, and science is no exception. Our sustainable development, our very future depends on what we do to promote and ensure the participation of women and girls in science.”

The panelists — Nawa Raj Dhakal, Acting Executive Director at Alternative Energy Promotion Centre, Ministry of Energy, Water Resources and Irrigation, Nuva Rai, Programme Officer at National Indigenous Women Forum, and Dr Tista Prasai Joshi, Senior Researcher at Nepal Academy of Science and Technology — called for action from the government, international development partners, and civil society to:

Include more indigenous women and girls in research honoring the fact that indigenous women are repositories of knowledge on land, environment, and biodiversity.

Increase investment for women and girls to pursue education in STEM.

Break harmful gender norms prevalent within families, communities and formal structures that prevent women and girls from pursuing and leading careers in science and technology.

In her keynote remarks, Pramila Devi Bajracharya, Secretary of Science, Ministry of Education, Science and Technology emphasized that science and technology are the primary tools for prosperity in society and we need to amplify the voices and participation of women in STEM. Additionally, Rameshwor Prasad Yadav, Deputy Secretary General, Nepal National Commission for UNESCO stressed that social structures have prevented women from realizing their full potential- a woman can be anything, including a scientist, a social scientist, or scientist at home in his closing remarks.

Gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls is crucial not only for economic development, but also to meeting the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The United Nations General Assembly adopted the resolution 70/212 on 22 December 2015 and declared February 11 as the International Day of Women and Girls in Science. The resolution reaffirmed the importance of gender equality and women participation in the policies, programmes and decision making related to the Sustainable Development Goals. It further recognized the crucial role and contribution of women and girls in science, technology and innovations.

South Korea Wants To Extend Economic Support To Nepal: Special Envoy Sung Min JANG

As Nepal and Republic of Korea are going to celebrate their 50th Anniversary of the establishment of

diplomatic relations a high level government delegation from Republic of Korea visited Nepal.

Special envoy of ROK Sung Min JANG also paid a courtesy call on Foreign Minister Dr. Bimala Rai Paudyal. According to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, discussions were held on various areas of bilateral and multilateral cooperation during the meeting.

Lauding the close relationship maintained by the two countries, Minister Dr. Paudyal asked the RoK to cooperate with Nepal in the fields of education, health, tourism, Buddhism and cultural exchanges, according to a press statement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The delegation is scheduled to meet Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal ‘Prachanda’ before wrapping up its visit to Nepal on Tuesday.

Special Envoy of the President of the Republic of Korea (RoK) Jang Sung Min visited Nepal. After meeting high officials, he addressed a press conference. He called for further strengthening bilateral relations based on goodwill, friendship and mutual cooperation



between Nepal and South Korea.

“Nepal and South Korea are going to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations next year. Against this backdrop, we have come here to discuss how enhance the economic cooperation between the two countries in the next 50 years,” said Jang at a press meet.

A high-level team led by Jang arrived in Kathmandu on Sunday with the aim of consolidating the bilateral ties between the two friendly nations and expanding the area of cooperation.

Nepal and Republic of Korea had established their diplomatic relations on May 15, 1974 and RoK has been providing support to Nepal in various areas health, education, local development and technical education.

Stating that the President of the RoK wanted to extend economic support to Nepal in order to help boost the latter’s economy by bolstering bilateral relations in

the next 50 years, he said that the two nations could have powerful partnerships in economic and cultural fields.

“I believe that Nepal’s economy will get a boost if we are able to strengthen economic cooperation significantly through government-to-government level as the RoK has become the 10th economic super power in the last 70 years,” Jang said.

“There are many commonalities between Nepal and South Korea. So, the relations between the two countries are getting consolidated through promoting exchanges at the government-to-government and people-to-people levels,” he said.

The RoK has been extending its development cooperation to Nepal since 1976. It provides two types of grants, including aids and technical cooperation to Nepal through the Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA).

According to him, the tourism sector also holds potentials for cementing bilateral relations and contributing to economic development as many Korean tourists want to visit Nepal in their lifetime.

“When I return home, I will work for the enhancement of the tourism sector of Nepal by sending more Koreans. Nepal is an important place to visit as it is home to Mount Everest, Lumbini and rich culture,” he said.

He added that the government of Korea has been receiving Nepali workers through the EPS (Employment Permit System) with high priority because they are honest and hardworking. “Nepali workers in Korea are not only contributing to the economic development of Nepal but also helping the Korean economy,” he said.

He assured that the government of Korea would receive more workforce from Nepal with Korean employers showing their interest in providing jobs to Nepalis.

Around 80,000 Nepalis have so far gone to the RoK through EPS. Currently, above 40,000 Nepalis are working in different parts of South Korea.

Ambassador to RoK to Nepal Park Chong-suk also presented at the press meet.

Japan Hands Over A Childbirth Center In Dang District

The Government of Japan handed over a Childbirth Center in Ghorahi Municipality, Dang District. Kikuta Yutaka, Ambassador of Japan to Nepal, attended the ceremony.

Under the Grant Assistance for Grassroots Human Security Projects (GGP) of

the Japanese government, the project to construct the Childbirth Center and install

medical equipment run by the Family Planning Association of Nepal (FPAN) was

supported with USD 91,920 (approximately

NPR 10 million).

On this occasion, Ambassador Kikuta congratulated and appreciated the efforts

of everyone involved in the project. He emphasized that children are the hope for the future of this country. Thus, taking care of them and their mothers is an essential responsibility for society as a whole. The newly constructed, earthquake-resistant, and well-equipped center will greatly benefit families and the community



by providing safe delivery and proper pre- and post-natal care and services.

Ambassador Kikuta said that 2022 was the 120th year since Nepal dispatched

its first eight students to Japan for their study. He expressed his pleasure to celebrate the completion of the project in February 2023 in the same spirit of this wonderful anniversary. He added that he hoped that the results of this project would contribute greatly to the development of child and maternal health care in Nepal and to further exchanges between the two countries.

Established in 1959, FPAN provides family planning services, including gynecological services, counseling, HIV/AIDS testing and treatment, throughout the country through its headquarters and 31 branches.

The Embassy believes that this support for a Childbirth Center will both help the mothers and babies attending the center and further strengthen the friendship between the people of Japan and Nepal.

GGP was established to implement projects directly benefiting people at the

grassroots level for community socio-economic development. Since 1991, over 200 GGP projects have been implemented in Nepal.

BUSINESS BRIEF

Nepal And The World Bank Launch Water Sector Governance And Infrastructure Support Project

The Water Sector Governance and Infrastructure Support Project was jointly launched today by the Honorable Minister of Water Supply, Abdul Khan and World Bank Country Director for Maldives, Nepal, and Sri Lanka, Faris Hadad-Zervos.

The \$100 million project, of which \$80 million is financed by the World Bank and \$20 million from government counterpart funding, will help Nepal improve the delivery of water and sanitation services and promote integrated water resources management. Aligned with Nepal's federalism principles, the six-year project puts the municipalities at the forefront of project planning and implementation with a focus on strengthening service delivery and institutional capacities.

"In the context of climate change and federalism, delivering improved water supply and sanitation services and integrated water resources management are critical for economic and social progress. Strengthening sector governance and capacity at the federal, provincial, and local levels to improve institutional and regulatory reforms will be the key drivers to achieve this," stated Abdul Khan, Minister of Water Supply. "The project complements the Government of Nepal's existing programs in transitioning the sector service delivery to the municipalities as provided for under the Local Governance Operation Act 2017."



The project will be implemented in six municipalities of two provinces: Birendranagar and Sharada municipalities in Karnali Province; and Dipayal Silgadhi, Bardogoria, Joshipur, and Janaki

municipalities in Sudurpashchim Province. Both the provinces have low access to water supply and sanitation services, and a higher incidence of poverty, and are vulnerable to climate change.

"This project will help promote green, resilient, and inclusive water supply and sanitation services to over 400,000 people while providing employment opportunities and skills training to women in the water and sanitation sector," stated Faris Hadad-Zervos, World Bank Country Director for Maldives, Nepal, and Sri Lanka. "With our continued collaboration with the development partners and the private sector, the World Bank looks forward to supporting the Government of Nepal in strengthening federalism through improved capacity in delivering water and sanitation services to targeted local communities."

The project agreement for the Water Sector Governance and Infrastructure Support Project was signed in July 2022 by the Government of Nepal and the World Bank.

New ADBL CEO Assumes Office

Newly appointed Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Agricultural Development Bank Limited (ADBL) Govind Gurung has assumed office responsibility.

Suman Dahal, acting chairman of the Board of Directors, administered the oath of office and secrecy to the newly appointed CEO Gurung.



Based on the recommendation of the sub-committee formed to recommend the candidates for the appointment of Chief Executive Officer from the Board of Directors of ADBL, the Board of Directors has appointed Gurung as the CEO of the bank for a period of four years on Saturday.

The CEO selection sub-committee chose the names of five people from among the 22 who had applied for the post of CEO. From the presentation and interview, the selection sub-committee recommended the names of three persons to the bank's Board of Directors. The Board of Directors appointed Gurung as the CEO of the bank from among the three persons recommended by the selection sub-committee.

The newly appointed CEO Gurung has a long experience in the banking sector, having previously served as the Chief Executive Officer in Civil Bank and Citizens Bank, Myanmar, according to a press statement of ADBL.

In addition, the newly appointed CEO Gurung called a staff meeting in the presence of the Deputy General Managers, Heads of Departments of all the departments and took information about the overall activities of the bank and gave instructions to forward the departmental work in a more robust manner by understanding the changing banking market in the days ahead.

Jazeera Airways To Resume Flights From Bhairahawa

The Jazeera Airways is resuming its flight to Kuwait from Bhairahawa starting from March 9.

Bhishma Prasad Neupane, Chairman of Siddhartha Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI), said that Amit Nagarath, commercial manager of Jazeera Airways Nepal office, has informed them that the Airways will resume flights from Bhairahawa on March 9.

In addition to the SCCI, Nepal Travels and Tours Association (NATTA), Lumbini, had been holding discussion with the Jazeera and lobbying for resuming flights.



Jazeera had started international flights from 16 May, 2022, the day when the Gautam Buddha International Airport was inaugurated and continued it till 18 December, during which it has 154 take off and similar number of landing; 13,593 passengers had flown while 18,025 landed in the period.

However, the airways had suspended its flights in the pretext of weather since December 18 as there is no installing of Instrumental Landing System due to India's apathy.

Deal signed for safe water services thru tech sharing

Nepal's Diyalo Technologies has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with JanaJal, India's leading safe water services platform, to focus on the challenges of drinking water sector through technology sharing.

Janajal is engaging in digitising the water treatment and last mile delivery of safe water through technology, Diyalo said in a statement.

Along with the MOU, it has been agreed to cooperate strategically and commercially to solve the challenges in the drinking water sector of Nepal and India through the exchange and integration of their respective technologies.

P.R. Khanal, Founder and CEO of Diyalo and JanaJal's Founder and CEO, Dr. Parag Agarwal signed the MOU on behalf of their respective organisations.

As per the MOU, JanaJal will support the expansion of



the smart water management system/assets management system developed by Diyalo Technologies in the Indian market, while Di-

yalo will support the expansion of JanaJal's water ATMs and 'Water on Wheels' in Nepal.

"In addition to this, it has also been agreed to conduct various training programmes in Nepal and India and to exchange their experiences and best practices in technology implementation to help improve access to safe drinking water," read the statement.

Diyalo has developed IOT-enabled web-based software, mobile application and water intelligence system in the area of financial good governance, water quality monitoring, compliance and regulation, water leakage measurement, customer experience enrichment, assets managements, water production and distribution automation in order to effectively manage water utilities, improve their sustainability in order to ensure the right of people on safe drinking water services.

These technologies have helped utilities for maintaining transparency, good governance, increased revenue, reduced cost, and improved quality, better customer relationship. It has digitised about 700 utilities in Nepal so far, and is preparing for the launch in international market including India.

Similarly, JanaJal operates more than 800 water ATMs and existing Water Treatment Plants across India that are remotely monitored through their proprietary IOT technology platform called JJSUITE.

COVID-19's Impact On South Asia's Youth Could Last Generations

The COVID-19 pandemic derailed development and caused a massive collapse in human capital for millions of children and young people across South Asia, according to a new World Bank analysis of data for people who were under the age of 25 at the onset of the pandemic.

Human capital—the knowledge, skills, and health that people accumulate over their lives—is key to unlocking a child's potential and enabling countries to achieve a resilient recovery and strong future growth. Yet, the pandemic shuttered schools and places of employment and disrupted key services that protect and promote human capital, such as healthcare and job training.

The new report, *Collapse and Recovery: How COVID Eroded Human Capital and What to Do About It* presents the first comprehensive analysis of global data on the pandemic's impacts on young people at key developmental stages: early childhood (0-5 years), school age (6-14 years), and youth (15-24 years). It finds that in South Asia, today's students could lose up to 14.4 percent of their future earnings due to COVID-19-induced education shocks. The cognitive deficit in today's toddlers could translate into a 25 percent decline in earnings when these children are adults.

"The pandemic shut down schools, decimated jobs, and plunged vulnerable families into crisis, pushing millions of South Asia's children and young people off-track and depriving them of opportunities to flourish," said Martin Raiser, World Bank Vice President for South Asia. "Action to recover from losses in human capital is critical and examples from the region show that this is possible at relatively low cost if governments act fast."

In South Asia, between April 1, 2020 and March 31, 2022, schools were fully or partially closed for 83 percent of the time—significantly longer than the global average of schools being closed for 52 percent of that same period. Among school aged children, on average, for every 30 days of school closures, students lost about 32 days of learning. This is because school closures and ineffective

remote learning measures caused students to miss out on learning and to also forget what they had already learned. As a result, learning poverty – already 60 percent before the pandemic — has increased further, with an estimated 78 percent of 10-year-olds in South Asia unable to read and understand a simple written text.



Moves And Counter Moves



BY: DR. TILAK RAWAL

Despite the five-party alliance winning most seats and Nepali Congress (NC) emerging as the largest party in the House of Representatives and its President Deuba seen almost on the verge of becoming Prime Minister for the sixth time, last minute decision of Prachanda to break the alliance and side with Oli deprived Deuba and NC of countless opportunities. This ostensibly sudden and dramatic move is also said to have deprived very senior NC leader Ramachandra Poudyal of the opportunity to become President of Nepal. It was said that Maoist Chair had made up his mind to support Poudyal for the post of President provided NC agreed to let him become the Prime Minister first. The Deubas' refusal, despite some NC leaders' suggestion not to do so, did not take much time for Prachanda to move towards Oli who was doing serious homework to rope in influential leaders

of different parties including the Maoist Chief. Indeed, UML Chief Oli was desperately waiting to extend a red-carpet welcome to Prachanda and the two adversaries wasted not much time in becoming political friends one more time, announcing formation of a new alliance and that the government to be formed would be headed by the Chair of the Maoist Centre. Post-election

scenario was very fluid with news of meetings happening between leaders of different parties and serious differences and disputes amongst leaders both at the inter and intra party level. People were in know of talks between Oli and senior leaders of Maoist Centre and the possibility of NC and UML joining hands to form a government was also not completely ruled out. It was very well known that while Prachanda was having several rounds of meeting with Prime Minister Deuba, some senior Maoist leaders were engaged in serious dialogue with Oli. As expected by many, the five-party electoral alliance fell apart. It is very difficult to say what made Deuba become so confident that Prachanda and Oli could never come together and no one can stop NC/him from heading the next government. Oli's success in roping in a large number of elected member of the HOR representing different parties, Prachanda's flexibility/alertness and Deuba's greed and inappropriate assessment of the prevailing political fluidity, created a new political equation, throwing buckets of ice-cold water on Deuba on chilling winter days of December 2022. Deuba was clearly outsmarted by Oli as a result

of which NC not only failed to form a government in Kathmandu but also in provinces where it would have been adequately represented had the alliance with Prachanda not broken. In addition, the party also lost the opportunity of having its lion's share

in appointments of its followers to different attractive positions. This colossal loss of opportunity has understandably angered NC well-wishers, who find Deuba's self-centered acts as the reasons for the uncomfortable situation that the party got in. More than blaming Prachanda, NC leaders and followers held Deuba's rigid miscalculated stance and greed for power for the creation of this unpleasant situation. Further, with leaders, especially those belonging to Shekhar Koirala faction, openly criticizing Deuba for not being able to retain the five-party alliance, it seemed NC president would have tough time in the party and would have very little to

put forth in defense of his acts. Surprisingly, however, Deuba did not remain quite for long and began to make moves.

Deuba started by assuring his followers that NC would soon come back to power and also advised them not to offend Prachanda much. He was probably not wrong in seeing the possibility of Prachanda, who abandoned him breaking the five-party alli-

ance, getting back to him over time, leaving the seven-party alliance. NC followers and many observers in the beginning took Deuba's utterances nothing more than an attempt to assuage their anger but people became little serious when he decided to give the vote of confidence to Prachanda. Albeit controversial, NC's decision to vote in favour of confidence motion on January 10 drew serious attention of many people including Oli who observed that NC was trying to create a rift in the seven-party alliance. Indeed, a shift in Prachanda's stance on some important issues such as election of the new president and reported differences with Oli pertaining to inclusion in the Cabinet of some politicians have begun to attract serious attention of people. Deuba and Dahal seem to be rightfully thinking that concentrating major power in the hands of one party (Oli-led UML) could be fearfully risky. Moreover, Dahal is not wrong in believing that if both posts (speaker and president) went to the UML, it would be difficult for him to run the government. Ouster of Rabi Lamichhane as home minister, whose election to the HOR was invalidated by the Supreme Court on citizenship issue, and

Beyond doubt, political situation in the country has continued to remain instable and the trio's (Deuba, Oli and Prachanda) post-election acts seem to have contributed towards enhancing political fluidity. The major beneficiary of this political chaos has been Deuba who has not only succeeded in quietening his opponents within the party but has made considerable headway in bringing Prachanda back to him. A master manipulator, Deuba, cannot be behind the other two, which is shown by his untiring efforts to push the two adversaries-turned-friends apart.

his party's decision to quit the government seem to have further widened the differences between the two alliance leaders. While Oli was totally in favour of getting Rabi back to his original position in the government after the issuance of citizenship certificate to him, Prime Minister Dahal maintained that he should remain out pending resolution of some other issues legally registered against him. It would be interesting to see whether the two top leaders will remain solidly behind him in his bid to get reelected from Chitawan- 2 where by-election will be held soon. Deuba-led NC has also succeeded in bringing down the UML-led government in Far West, using Nagarik Unmukti Party (NUP) lawmakers who did not support the confidence

motion placed by the government there. An NC –led government is in place there but nobody can say how long this government will continue because the current alliance seems to be doing everything possible to placate NUP leaders. A six-month jail term imposed on one of LUP federal lawmakers who was found guilty of setting ablaze a tractor years ago but was absconding until February 2 when he was finally arrested, has been waived off. It would be interesting to see the winner in this political game at Kailali. Beyond doubt, political situation in the country has continued to remain instable and the trio's (Deuba, Oli and Prachanda) post-election acts seem to have contributed towards enhancing political fluidity. The major beneficiary of this political chaos has been Deuba who has not only succeeded in quietening his opponents within the party but has made considerable headway in bringing Prachanda back to him. A master manipulator, Deuba, cannot be behind the other two, which is shown by his untiring efforts to push the two adversaries-turned-friends apart. People have no serious objection to these very familiar moves but their only prayer to these great leaders of our country is that their moves should not be at the cost of our ailing economy and wellbeing of people of Nepal.

Like in other parts of the world, high cost of living have inflicted injury on people of Nepal, too but unlike people elsewhere Nepalis have not taken to the street in protest. Not even an iota of improvement is seen in the economy as the current dispensation has not been able to arrest its deterioration. Revenue generated was not able to meet the recurrent expenditure towards the end of Deuba's fifth stint as prime minister, which is still continuing. According to information available from the Auditor General's Office, government expenditure has exceeded income by more than Rs. 100 billion. Likewise, actual flow of foreign loan and grant has also remained unsatisfactory. Against a foreign loan and grant target of about Rs.298 billion, only 11.61 percent of it has been actualized in the six months of this fiscal year.

Finance Minister Bishnu Poudyal has confessed that the economy, which he inherited some two months ago, is not in good shape and the targets set on different fronts by

the earlier government are unachievable. Through the mid-term review, he reduced the budget size for the current fiscal year by 14 percent. Primary allocation on recurrent and capital expenditure has been trimmed to Rs.1021.92 billion and Rs.313.5 billion, respectively. Realizing the negative impact on revenue collection of import regulation and economic slowdown, revenue collection target of Rs.1403 billion has also been slashed to Rs.1244 billion. This act of Poudyal is not unusual in that his predecessors also took the liberty of slashing the budgetary targets during half yearly reviews, but the huge cut this time has caused concern that Poudyal

Leaders of this country have more important things to pay attention to and they are seen engaged in making moves and counter moves, currently focusing on president election, to protect their interest. It should, however, not be too much to expect Bishnu Poudyal to find time to immediately do something to ameliorate the condition of relief-seeking farmers and consumers. You do not have the luxury of time.

should have put all his efforts into budget execution instead of going for this kind of slash. Hope he is not just trying to play safe, trimming targets fixed earlier and does not repeat the mistake of his predecessor (Jannardan Sharma) who wasted lots of time formulating and getting the replacement bill passed by the House. All of us are unanimous that Nepal has to embark upon a steady process

of reducing our fearful trade deficit, which can be effected through increasing internal production, starting with basic items such as edibles the production of which can be substantially increased in the very short run. Production, however, could decline in a situation where farmers are seen at different places throwing their produces on roads due to lack of market. However paradoxical it may sound, the existing reality is that farmers are offered prices that do not even cover the cost of production of their produces and consumers in urban areas have to pay exorbitant prices for the same.

The Duo (Prachanda, Poudyal) may wish to pay some attention to different provisions that Government of India has made in its federal budget for the year 2023\2024, which was made public on February 1, 2023. The point of concern for us should be that the budget has made encouraging provisions for small and medium enterprises and more than 100 million farmers will be given Rs. 2.2 lakh crores cash grant, which will contribute towards making produces there all the more cheaper. If timely measures are not initiated in Nepal, land under agricultural crops will further decrease and reliance on import to meet our consumption requirement will further accelerate. Leaders of this country have more important things to pay attention to and they are seen engaged in making moves and counter moves, currently focusing on president election, to protect their interest. It should, however, not be too much to expect Bishnu Poudyal to find time to immediately do something to ameliorate the condition of relief-seeking farmers and consumers. You do not have the luxury of time.

Dr.Rawal is a former governor of NRB

POLITICS

Presidential Election

Nepalese political leaders are divided over who should be the country's next president.

By A CORRESPONDENT

Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal Prachanda has paid frequent and regular visits to UML leader KP Sharma Oli's residence over the past month, and Oli has reciprocated. As the Election Commission has set March 9, Prachanda and Oli are trying to build a consensus on candidates.

As the election date for the new President approaches, PM Prachanda and UML leader Oli are attempting to bury their differences over the candidate, which is widening.

Voting Structure

The new president will

be elected by the members of the Federal Parliament and the Provincial Legislatures. There are a total of 884 votes which include 275 House of Representatives members, 59 National Assembly members, and 550 Provincial Members from seven provinces.

As with national politics, no single party now has a clear majority to elect the President. Only a coalition of more than two parties can make a victory in the elections.

Out of 275 members of the House of Representatives (165 FPTP and 110 PR), the Nepali Congress 89, the CPN-

UML 78, the Maoist Center 32, the Rastriya Swatantra Party 20, the RPP 14, the Unified Socialist 10, the Janta Samajbadi Party 12, the Janta Party 6, the Loktantrik Samajwadi Party 4, the Rastriya Janmorcha 1, and the Nepal Majdoor Kisan Party one and 4 independent.

CPN-UML holds 18 seats in the National Assembly, followed by the Maoist Center (16), Nepali Congress (10), Unified Socialist (8), Samajbadi Party (3 seats), Loktantrik Samajbadi Party (1 seat), Independent (2 seats), and Rastriya Janmorcha (1 seat).

Similarly, NC has 176



provincial members out of 550 (330 FPTP and 220 PR), followed by CPN-UML 161, Maoist Center 83, Unified Socialist 22, RPP 26, Rastriya Unmukti Party 11, and Samajbadi Party 20, with the remainder going to others.

PM's Trouble

The new government, formed two months ago and led by Prime Minister Prachanda, is already in crisis over who will be the next President.

Prime Minister Prachanda is surviving in an uncertain situation after the Rastriya Swatantra Party, led by television anchor Rabi Lamichhane, quit the government. He has begun talks with the CPN-UML-US, led by Madhav Kumar Nepal, and the Federal Socialist Party, led by Upendra Yadav, to fill the 20-vote gap.

While negotiations for a consensus candidate continue, some have suggested that former King Gyanendra be considered as

a possible neutral candidate for the position of President.

However, chairperson KP Sharma Oli has stated that the UML's candidate will be the next President. Speaking to reporters at Biratnagar, former Prime Minister Oli expressed hope that a consensus could be reached to ensure the victory of the UML's presidential candidate.

"On the day of nomination registration, we will make public the party's presidential candidate. "The current alliance will continue as it was formed with understanding and thought," Oli said. "There was also support from Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal's 'Prachanda' party to make UML's presidential candidate victorious."

While CPN-UML leader Oli emphasizes the UML's candidate, Nepali Congress leaders are also pressing for their own candidates for party president.

During a recent meeting,

Nepali Congress General Secretary Bishwo Prakash Sharma stated that the NC's candidate would be the next president.

"The candidate from the NC ought to be the next president. There is no question about it," said he. According to him, it was only right that the NC, as the largest party in the parliament, should hold the coveted position of President, who is in charge of upholding and enforcing the constitution.

At a meeting of the office-bearers of the ruling CPN (Maoist Centre), it was resolved to give PM Prachanda all authority to choose the candidate for president, even though the two major political parties Nepali Congress and CPN-UML are pushing their candidates.

According to Deb Gurung, a member of the party's politburo, "Party Head Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda' would have the final say about the pres-

POLITICS

idential election and candidate. When necessary, the prime minister will put the president's name forward."

As the deadline for filing nominations for the election of the presidential candidate approaches, political parties are in frenzy. Prachanda, the chair of the CPN Maoist, has already accepted a mandate from the meeting.

Elections Program Voter list publication

proaches, other parties are, nonetheless, occupied in internal debates. All political parties assert that they desire a president chosen by national consensus. Each party, however, is free to make its own decision.

The time requires all those forces who were together during the signing of the 12-point Comprehensive Peace Agreement and the promulgation of the Constitution to stand together once more, according to Prime Min-

and Vice President."

The need for the major political parties to work together is undeniable, and we have a variety of options for fostering a culture of national consensus. Prime Minister Prachanda, he urged the major political parties to begin the next phase of the political process by reaching an understanding.

The Prime Minister stated that maintaining unity

is once more necessary for those forces that came together during the creation of the Constitution and the CPA.

He stated there was a discussion going on about creating a socialist front and that a decision wouldn't be made until



22, February

Final Voter List Publication 24

Filing nomination on 25 February

Publication of final candidate list on 28 February

Voting will take place On March 3 (10-15:00)

While the deadline for registering candidates for the election of the President ap-

proaches, other parties are, nonetheless, occupied in internal debates. All political parties assert that they desire a president chosen by national consensus. Each party, however, is free to make its own decision.

He believed that a national consensus culture would help to ameliorate the problem. "National consensus should be used to handle the nation's problems, and it is in the same spirit to wish for political consensus concerning the elections of the President

the party central committee meeting. "The front will be crucial in turning the nation's current issues into opportunities. Certain political parties are working on unification-related homework. We'll make a decision shortly," Prachanda remarked.

Sher Bahadur Deuba, the leader of the Nepali Congress, has remained silent de-

spite calls for consensus from the heads of the two largest political parties. Former Prime Minister Deuba made it apparent in an earlier speech that they should be handed the presidency to foster consensus politics.

As Nepal is about to elect a new President for the next five years – after Nepal went through a national election earlier in 2022, there is also growing concern in the capital of both of Nepal's neighbors.

Following the visit of India's foreign secretary Kwatra, China dispatched a communist party minister. Some analysts link Chinese and Indian Foreign

Secretaries' visits to the upcoming Presidential elections.

Both visits were more political than diplomatic for them. At a time when the Prime Minister's position in Nepal has become extremely precarious due to frequent changes in government and ad hoc power-sharing arrangements devised by political parties, the position of the President has grown in importance and is viewed as a stable institution to work in times of crisis.

Although the President's position is only ceremonial and has limited authority, the institution can play an important role during a political vacuum.

During his first term, former president Dr. Ram Baran Yadav

used his executive authority to choose the caretaker government and to reinstall the Nepal Army Commander who had been fired by Prachanda.

President Bhandari has similarly demonstrated the power of the ceremonial president by refusing to sign the Citizenship bill and to issue ordinances. This is the reason why the presidential election has received significant attention from both internal and external elements.

Given the makeup of the parliament and electoral system, there is a good likelihood that the nation will once again experience severe political instability. This could also be the cause of the President's institution becoming more significant.



Decline And Fall Of The Nepali Maoists



BY: DIPAK GYAWALI

In the parliamentary elections of November 2022, senior Maoist leader and minister for energy & water resources Pampha Bhusal was convincingly defeated, losing her seat she held since as far back as the 2008 first Constituent Assembly to Independent Party's Toshima Karki, a young doctor in her early twenties. And this, in Kathmandu Valley's robust Maoist stronghold where many Maoist leaders including Prachanda and Baburam Bhattarai had lived safely during their "underground" days. Their massive win in 2008 is now a much-eroded memory; and had it not been for Nepali Kangress suicidally supporting them in an ideologically unholy alliance, their party would have fared much worse than they did this time around. Why?

To search for an answer, I went back to an article in Nepali Himal I wrote in mid-March 2000 (1 Chaitra 2056) titled "Prachanda's Internet Interview: Nepali Maoists' Intellectual Face". Prachanda had been interviewed by an American journalist [Li Onesto](#) of the Revolutionary Worker when very much underground, and it created a sensation. Because I had studied Marxism, Leninism all the way to "Scientific Communism" while an engineering student in Moscow in the 1970s, the editor asked me to review it for the Nepali audience. After reading the 24-page A4 size interview, I was aghast: this mysterious underground character seemed not only to have no understanding of Marxist fundamentals but also had views that contradicted much of what he himself or his colleagues like Baburam Bhattarai were saying. It has now taken almost two decades for the fraud to be exposed at a mass level, more an indictment of Nepal's intellectual class than the street-smartness of the Maoists.

It was whispered among those close to the Palace but not well-known that Prachanda and top Maoist leadership lived safely in Indian cities, mostly New Delhi. This fact has been exposed by Indian General Ashok Mehta who warned in a newspaper article back in 2008 when Prachanda started dallying with the Chinese, "You should remember, out of the 10 years of Peoples' War, you live eight years in Delhi!" Now, as documented in JNU Professor S.D. Muni's article in the book [Nepal in Transition](#) especially in footnotes between pages 317 to 329, Maoists had surrendered to the Indian intelligence agencies and were being used as pawns against the monarchy (Muni's footnote 14

in page 321: see my review of this book in [Biblio India](#)). What was galling in Prachanda's interview (also now to his wounded guerillas and widowed families) was his chutzpah in fulminating against Indian imperialism even while being sheltered by its spooks, perhaps with their blessing that if anything went awry, the name 'Maoist' was sufficient to pin the blame on the Chinese! Which is why, in those days, the Chinese never called them by that name but instead referred to them as "anti-government bandits"!

Prachanda's understanding of Nepal's political economy was questionable from the very start. In the Ones-to interview, he states that Nepal is a "semi-feudal, semi-colonial" country where salvation lay in the overthrow of the regime by a violent "peoples' war". Another matter that their uprising had been triggered by a corrupt Nepali Kangress-UML dispensation that unleashed violent police action Operation Romeo against innocent village supporters of their parent party Rashtriya Jana Morcha. Moreover, it was not monarchy they opposed (Baburam then was pleading with King Birendra to help them fight the corrupt Kangress-UML combo) but the Westminster parliamentary version of governance which they labeled "a butcher's shop where you display goat's head but sell dog's meat"!

Prachanda and many of the Vulgar Marxists hold on to a linear "step-ladder" view of history that sees non-industrialized, non-capitalist countries as "feudal", Nepal of course being a prime example for them. They unfortunately don't seem to have looked at economic figures that show otherwise. When the Rana regime was overthrown in 1951, Nepal could have been called "feudal", although many scholars argue that was never so, that Ranas were autocratic but hardly feudal. Be that as it may, one criterion in establishing the "feudalness" of a country is where a government's main source of revenue comes from. While it may have been land in 1951 (agriculture being 80% of the GDP), it had shrunk in the 1970s to 40%; and most of the government's revenues by the time of Prachanda's interview came from import tax raised at five custom points such as Birganj, Biratnagar, Kodari, Bhairawa and TIA. It meant that the state was already in the hands of trading class *comprador bourgeoisie* and hardly the feudal overlords if any who had already been wiped out by King Mahendra's land reforms of the 1960s.

Nepalis who could feed themselves and their dependents all-year round from their land, when the Maoists began their insurgency in 1996, were no more than 15%. Nepali peasants too had long stopped being serfs to feudal overlords but, as victims of village moneylenders, had been forced to become wage labourers to eke out a living, mostly in India, but as it became easier to get a Nepali passport in the districts itself – a reform measure undertaken by parliamentary forces in the late 1990s to provide succor to their village supporter terrorized by the Maoists – in the Gulf, Malaysia and South Korea. This was the classic case described by Karl Polanyi for 18th century England of citizen peasants uprooted from their social base and converted – as living trees to merchantable dead lumber – into labour bereft of social capital feeding the “satanic mill” of market capitalism.

What the remittance economy did – starting with Gurkha recruitment under the Ranas and accelerated to almost 30% of the country’s GDP today due mostly to the insecurity suffered by many during the Maoist violence – is to create what is now called “*desakota*” conditions. The word is from Bahasa Indonesia combining two Sanskrit-origin words: *desh* meaning rural, and *kot* meaning city, the two together meaning neither rural nor urban but a mix of both. A villager in a remote Nepali hamlet whose income basket is 40% from rural sources and 60% from remittance sent by sons or husbands (and now even daughters as nurses in Israel and UK) would be rural or urban in those proportions, with commensurate aspirations and behaviour. This phenomenon throws all rural-urban bifurcations in policy and planning out of the window, and requires a completely new approach to governance science that, let alone the Maoists, neither Nepal’s dominant political class of Kangress and UML nor their supporting international donors care to even think of. Prachanda’s political economy of “peoples’ war” against neo-feudalism, enshrined in the 2015 constitution and just a week ago as a national holiday, was thus as comic as Don Quixote’s tilting at the windmills, but far more lethal and tragic! It fed more and more innocent peasants into the “satanic mill”.

As a younger lot of Nepali economic and political historians begin to re-examine this tragic stage of the country’s political players and events, they will have to

confront the gap between Maoist rhetoric and basic ground reality that has moved these politicians to new opportunistic heights of personal nepotistic and crony capitalist aggrandizement. They will also have to explain the pathetic inability of the Kangress and UML to ideologically challenge the Maoists for their untenable political propositions.



Party declines but Prachanda rises!

Where would they have to begin? Besides Karl Polanyi’s political economy – certainly more realistic and relevant than Vulgar Marxism – they will also have to go back and take a look at Samir Amin’s classic The Future of Maoism. In this book, Amin distinguishes between three primary approaches to socialism – the Russian bureaucratic party control line, the Nehruvian Indian periphery-subservience-to-center reformist capitalism, and Maoist rural peasant-based course.

He argues that the other two will eventually lead to a surrender to capitalism while a genuine Maoist approach will lead to new empowerment. In a latter review of the apparent success of Nepali Maoists, he waxes eloquently romantic on how a new dawn is in the offing for the oppressed peasants world over.

Amir passed away in August 2018, two months after he was unable due to visa issues to come to Marx’s Bicentennial celebrations organized by ADRI in Patna and where, as a result, I had to step into his impossibly large shoes to deliver the Vladimir Lenin Memorial Lecture that he was supposed to have delivered. I had to ask why Nepali communists were not red or even pink but dyed blue capitalists. To assess not just local and national but also international “revolutionary” hopes dashed by the political and ideological fraud perpetrated by Prachanda’s Maoists, younger future scholars might like to reflect on a Soviet era joke which is a bit risqué but hits the nail on the head as far as the Nepali and (with the de-dollarization underway following the Ukraine conflict) international class conflict situations are concerned:

Teacher: Give an example of what Lenin meant by a “revolutionary situation”.

Student: When you place an impotent man on top of a frigid woman!

Teacher: What nonsense! What stupidity is this?

Student: Well, Lenin said: “A revolutionary situation arises when the ones on the top cannot, and the ones at the bottom want not [to be ruled as before]”!

Breaking Barriers

As the two nations have broken down numerous barriers in their power trade, Nepal and India have signaled that their relations are entering a new chapter as close economic partners in the energy sector. The recently concluded secretary-level meeting in Kathmandu, led by the foreign secretaries of Nepal and India, Bharat Raj Paudyal and Vinay Mohan Kwatra, appears to be a turning point. Both nations, which have been embroiled in geopolitics for years and are connected by geography, culture, religion, and civilization, appear to have grasped the need to pursue their shared interests in dealing with the relations

By KESHAB POUDEL

Since being trapped for years in a geopolitical vortex, ties between Nepal and India have resumed their normal course now. As these two countries are related by geography,

and India pave the way to create favorable conditions for signing agreements in several other bilateral business sectors and other areas of mutual interest with the backing of their polit-

reviewed various facets of Nepal-India relations, according to a press release from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

India committed during the meeting to allow long-term power exports from Nepal to India using all exchange market products. The decision was made during the bilateral meeting between Nepalese and Indian foreign secretaries, Bharat Raj Paudyal and Vinay Mohan Kwatra.

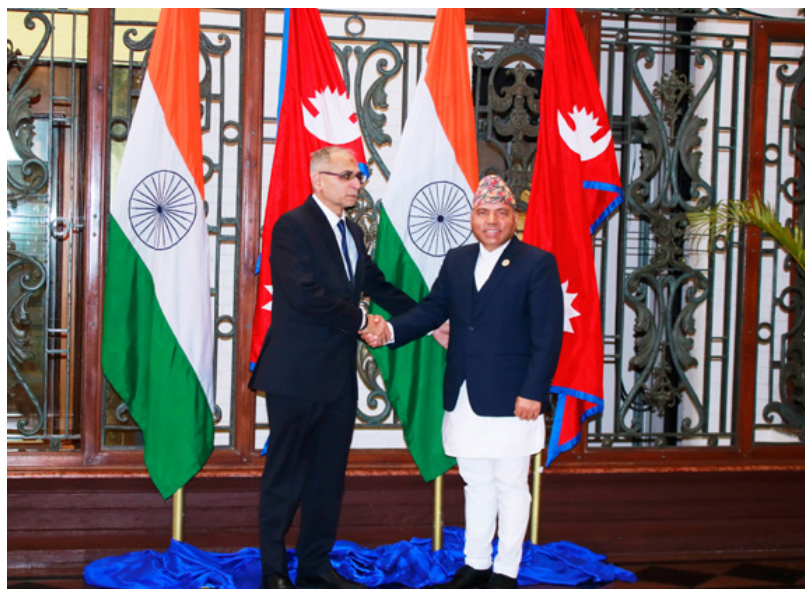
They also talked about the speedy approval of the four planned transmission line projects under LOC-IV and the technical upgrading of transnational transmission lines.

In their most recent meeting, the two parties also looked favorably upon the development of connecting projects such as railways, transmission lines, bridges, and ICPs.

Foreign Secretary Paudyal commended the Indian government for providing fertilizers, removing limitations on the export of food grains, and providing dialysis devices.

The early conclusion of the updated transit treaty, a review of the trade treaty, and the soonest possible meeting of the Intergovernmental Committee on Trade (IGC) were among the topics discussed between the two parties.

Nepal has also requested a new air route for the Gautam Buddha International Airport in Bhairahawa, albeit this request has not yet been granted. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs states that the Foreign Secretary of Nepal "reiterated the Government of Nepal's appeal for new air-entry



culture, religion, and civilization, the recent high-level meeting, which went smoothly in a warm friendly atmosphere listening to each other's concerns, has shown a way to bring the relations on track.

The recently concluded foreign secretary-level meeting of two close neighbors addressed many elements of Nepal-India relations in the spirit of proximity and shared interests, and it was clear that progress needed to be made away from the geopolitical vortex and toward shared interests.

The secretaries from Nepal

ical leadership.

Nepal's foreign secretary, Paudyal, is soft-spoken and diplomatically adept. He has successfully managed Nepal's bilateral relations with numerous nations while advancing Nepal's interests. Foreign Secretary Paudyal has successfully managed Nepal's foreign affairs thanks to the political leaders' trust.

The two foreign secretaries discussed, among other things, connectivity, trade and transit, cooperation in the power sector, agriculture, education, culture, the health sector, and people-to-people relations as they



routes as well as early concurrence of the close border flight operation of the Gautam Buddha International Airport, Bhairahawa.”

The two Foreign Secretaries also discussed boundary matters. In this regard, they exchanged views on completing the boundary works in the remaining segments through the established bilateral mechanisms. They also agreed to finalize the MoU between the foreign service academies of the two countries.

According to a press release from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the meeting took place in a friendly and courteous environment, highlighting the deep and complex ties between the two neighbors.

Foreign Secretary Kwatra also spoke with President Bidya Devi Bhandari, Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal “Prachanda,” and Minister of Foreign Affairs Dr. Bimala Rai Paudyal.

“The fallout of geopolitics in the region demands that both Nepal and India should be more cautious in dealing with each other’s concerns. However, relations between the two countries, once again, appear to have been moving in the right direction. Earlier, Nepalese foreign secretary

Bharat Raj Paudel paid an official visit to New Delhi and this week Indian foreign secretary Vinay Mohan Kwatra was in Kathmandu,” writes Chandra D. Bhatta in his recently published article in Outlook.

“Being a small state, the sentiment and emotions of people is very high in Nepal and that can alone be managed by creating the economic base and providing employment opportunities which, in turn, can be the best for these two civilization states to maintain the special relations in the long-term. In addition to this, all pending bilateral issues should be dealt

with high speed so that they cannot be used for political sloganeering.”

Such a visit is undoubtedly necessary given that the two nations have a long open border and shared civilization and those previous visits of this nature have been significant and helpful for Nepal. Nepal’s foreign secretary Paudyal has already shown his diplomatic prowess in previous high-level encounters with foreign secretaries from India,

fostering the close ties between the two countries.

Foreign Secretary Paudyal has illustrated the significance of these kinds of high-level discussions and visits by aiding in the preparation of the groundwork to establish a milestone in power trade with India. While the two countries bilateral relations are improving, it will be necessary to hold frequent consultation meetings in the future to resolve problematic issues.



CHIEF'S CONCLAVE

In Recognition Of Contributions

Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Prabhu Ram Sharma initiated a program to recognize and appreciate previous chiefs of both armies, who served as honorary generals of each nation and allow them to share and exchange their personal and professional experiences by hosting the first Chief's Conclave of retired chiefs of the Nepalese and Indian Army.

By KESHAB POUDEL

The 260th Nepal Army Day was a special and unforgettable occasion for the retired chiefs of the Nepalese and Indian armies who also served as honorary generals of both armies. The Nepal Army planned the Chief's Conclave for the first time in its history with outstanding programs.

The purpose of the Chief's Conclave is very clear: it was intended to thank them for their contributions to the army as honorary generals and to allow them to reconnect on a personal level. It was held to improve army-to-army connections and warm up interpersonal ties to further Nepal's larger interests.

The Chief's Colloquium of former Chiefs of the Nepal Army and



the India Army, which was organized by the Nepal Army at the initiative of COAS General Shrama, was a rare opportunity in and of itself. The retired Indian Army leaders enjoyed their four-day vacation by seeing temples

and mountains, sharing experiences and camaraderie, and attending receptions with their contemporaries and colleagues.

By allowing retired chiefs to take part in the Conclave, the Indian Army has additionally demonstrated its warmth and goodwill for the Nepali Army. India Army has unique ties to Nepal and the Nepali people thanks to its extremely cordial and solid institutional interactions with the Nepal Army. For this reason, the Indian Army reportedly helped to break the impasse in 2015 so that the supply of necessities could once again resume.

In times of natural calamities, the Indian Army has been a crucial source of humanitarian assistance for Nepal. In the 2015 earthquake, the Indian Army provided incredibly helpful assistance in the rescue and recovery efforts.

The pleasant, intelligent,



and competent Chief of Army Staff General Sharma is noted for his vast thoughts despite speaking relatively little. He has demonstrated this by planning the Chief's Conclave and inviting former chiefs as a mark of respect for their contributions.

In addition to providing former Indian Army Chiefs with helicopters, the Nepal Army also planned a trip to the Everest region and invited them to perform Puja in Mukti Chhetra.

The conclave, the first of its type, was conducted in conjunction with Maha Shivaratri and the 260th anniversary of the founding of the Nepalese Army. The Chief of the Army Staff (CoAS), General Sharma also attended the conclave. Several topics of common interest were discussed during the conclave, according to the Army Headquarters' Directorate of Public Relations and Information.

Former Indian Army Chiefs Manoj Mukund Naravane, Dalvir Singh Suhag, Dipak Kapoor, Joginder Jaswant Singh (JS), and Vishwa Nath Sharma attended the Army Day and conclave in Nepal.

General Prajwalla Sumsher JB Rana, General Pyar Jung Thapa, General Gaurav Sumsher JB Rana, General Rajendra Chhetri, and General Purna Chandra Thapa, all previous Army Chiefs from Nepal, participated in the conclave.

Former Chiefs of the Indian



Army and Nepali Army received the necessary respect from COAS General Sharma, an Honorary General of the Indian Army. On the 260th Army Day Ceremony, they were invited to the Nepal Army Pavilion Tundikhel as a special guest. During a wreath-laying ceremony on February 18, the former army chiefs also paid respect to the brave soldiers.

The conclave, according to the Army, will serve as a forum for thought exchange between the previous generation and the present Nepal Army leadership.

Although Indian Army has been hosting this kind of conclave for a long, Nepal Army started it this year with a gathering of serving and former chiefs of Nepal and the Indian Army.

The conclave deliberated on a range of key issues including ways to bolster the armed forces.

In continuation of an over seven-decade-old tradition, the Indian Army chiefs are conferred the honorary rank of 'General of the Nepal Army' by the Nepalese President. India also confers the honorary rank of 'General of Indian Army' to the Nepal Army Chief.

Nepal Army said the conclave is a forum for an exchange of ideas between the old guard and the current leadership of the Nepal Army. An interactive discussion on various administrative and human resources topics was held with senior officers of the Nepal Army.

All of the retired Indian Army chiefs left their homes with the feeling of camaraderie and travels to some of Nepal's most significant locations, such as Muktinath and the Everest region.

In his first year and a half in office, COAS General Sharma has already started several projects and reforms to improve the institutions of the Nepali army and the welfare of serving personnel and retired personnel. The Chief's Conclave was started by COAS General Sharma to honor former Chiefs for their accomplishments..





NEPAL-INDIA JSC MEET Power Trade Breakthrough

In the Nepal-India Power Trade meeting, a delegation headed by Dinesh Kumar Ghimire, secretary in the Ministry of Energy, Water Resources, and Irrigation, made substantial progress.

By Keshab Poudel

The 10th Joint Steering Committee (JSC), held in Mount Abu in Rajasthan, was an excellent opportunity for secretary Ghimire to make significant progress on Nepal-India bilateral trade and cooperation in the power sector as the bilateral meeting between the two countries foreign secretaries ended on amicable terms just a week ago.

The Nepalese delegation entered into negotiations in a relaxed manner given the understanding struck between Indian Foreign Secretary Vinay Mohan Kwatra and Nepalese Foreign Secretary Bharat Raj Paudyal during their recent bilateral level meetings to resolve the concerns in the power trade.

Secretary Ghimire has participated in numerous bilateral

power trade discussions with India and is a skilled negotiator. The gathering got underway on Mount Abu on February 18 and 19. The top JSC meeting was co-chaired by Dinesh Kumar Ghimire, Secretary (Energy), Ministry of Energy, Water Resources, and Irrigation, Government of Nepal, and Alok Kumar, Secretary (Power), Government of India.

Ghimire finally succeeded in convincing India to permit Nepalese electricity export to Bangladesh via India's transmission infrastructure despite missing the 10th JSC meeting. In a study on the power sector, the Joint Working Group (JWG) expressed India's willingness to permit the export of 50 MW of Nepalese electricity to Bangladesh via India.

The two sides agreed to continue power sector cooperation along the following axes: joint development of generation projects in Nepal, joint development of cross-border power transmission infrastructure, power trade under respective domestic regulations and policy frameworks, and capacity-building assistance. The two sides reaffirmed that the power sector cooperation is a strong pillar of the Nepal-India partnership.

The 10th meeting of the India-Nepal JSC, JWG on power sector cooperation was successful, and the Nepali side praised India for their kind welcome and hospitality in Mount Abu.

The Nepali side updated the Indian side on recent developments and future trends in Nepal's power generation, transmission,

and demand scenarios. The Indian side also acknowledged Nepal's recent increase in installed power generation capacity, which paves the way for stronger and mutually beneficial power sector cooperation.

The two parties also agreed to form a Joint Hydro Development Committee (JHDC) to further investigate the development of viable hydropower projects in Nepal, with a particular emphasis on storage projects.

Secretary Ghimire uses all of his skills to make a major breakthrough in the Nepal-India electricity trade at the 10th Secretary Level Joint Steering Meeting.

NEA's MD Ghising

With the Managing Director of Nepal Electricity Authority, Kul Man Ghising, in his delegation, Secretary Ghimire has an added advantage in using his power trading skills. MD Ghising, who has been dealing with the Indian power sector for many years, is very familiar with Nepal's demand and supply situation, as well as the area in Nepal, India's power trade.

"This meeting is a major milestone in Nepal, India power trade. We have made much progress to enhance Nepal-India pow-



er trade, particularly Nepal's export to India," said MD Ghising.

At a time when the national grid is receiving over 800 MW of surplus electricity from the upcoming monsoon, the agreement to add 200 MW capacity to the 400 kV Dhalkhebar-Muzaffarpur cross-border transmission line is extremely significant.

According to a Ministry press release, Nepal and India have reached an agreement to increase power import and export capacity from 600 to 800 MW via the first international Dhalkebar-Muzaffarpur 400 KV transmission line.

JSC has taken some important decisions on cross-border

electricity trade and in the expansion of electric transmission lines between the two countries.

The meeting also decided to forward the construction of high-capacity transmission lines for cross-border electricity trade.

In the meeting, the recommendations made by the joint secretary-level joint working group between the two countries, which was concluded on Friday, were discussed.

Managing Director of NEA Ghising said that the meeting of the joint steering committee was a milestone for electricity generation, transmission and trade.

MD Ghising, who participated in the meeting, said that India has positively accepted the proposal made by Nepal to export electricity to Bangladesh using India's transmission grid, and it has decided to give necessary consent after sending the name of the hydropower project to be exported.

"It has been decided to send the proposal of the project to export electricity to Bangladesh to the Central Electricity Authority of India for approval and after necessary examination by the Authority, and decided to give consent within the scope of the electricity import/export (cross border) guidelines issued by the government of India,"





said Ghising.

“Since we are currently getting approval for one year to sell electricity through competition in the day-ahead market of Indian Energy Exchange Limited (IEX), we proposed to extend it beyond one year. It has agreed to review by checking it.

Similarly, the meeting has also been agreed to process and approve the proposals submitted by us for the export of electricity for other additional projects,” he said.

Ghising said that based on the Nepal-India inter-government agreement, the proposal for long-term electricity export from Nepal has been made, and the Indian side is taking it positively and informed that the necessary decision would be taken after receiving the proposal from Nepal.

The meeting decided that as so far Nepal was only importing electricity from Tanakpur, now it would be allowed to export as well.

The meeting agreed to supply 70 MW from April to June and 80 MW from July to March from Tanakpur-Mahendranagar’s 132 kV single-circuit transmission line in both directions.

This has opened the way for hydropower projects located in various districts of Sudurpashchim

Province to be exported to India’s central transmission system during the dry season, MD Ghising said. “In addition, the joint technical group has been directed to find possible options to expand the capacity of the existing transmission line or to build a new transmission line of 200 kV.”

For electricity import and export between Nepal and India, it has been agreed to implement the Inaruwa-Purnia and New Lamki (Dodhara)-Bareilly 400 kV transmission lines by completing the construction in the year 2027-28 and 2028-29 respectively.

Ghising said that it was agreed to increase the electricity capacity being imported-exported from 600 MW to 800 through Dhalkebar-Muzaffarpur 400 kV first cross-border transmission line which is currently in operation.

Nepal had proposed to construct these transmission lines in the investment modality of the new Butwal-Gorakhpur transmission line. It has been agreed to finalize the investment modality soon.

Similarly, both parties have agreed to conclude the new Butwal-Gorakhpur line implementation and transmission service contract soon and to complete the

construction of the line by March 2025.

Fruitful Talks

The Indian side drew the Nepali side’s serious attention over the issues, including land acquisition, and obstruction of locals to the construction of the Arun III transmission line in the districts of Bhojpur, Khotang and Udayapur, among others.

In addition, the Indian side has requested to facilitate the construction of the Koshi Highway, citing that the construction schedule would be affected if large equipment including power transformers could not be delivered due to delays in the construction of the Koshi Highway.

The Nepali side has promised to solve the problem and take the necessary steps to create an environment to complete the project within the stipulated time. The construction of the project is targeted to be completed by March 2024.

Madhu Prasad Bhetwal, Joint Secretary of the Ministry of Energy, Water Resources, and Irrigation, who attended the JWG, stated that an agreement was reached to increase the capacity of import-export electricity through the Dhalkebar-Muzaffarpur 400 kV

transmission line by 200 MW.

He also stated that the two parties had reached an agreement to import and export 70 to 80 megawatts of electricity from the Tanakpur-Mahendranagar 132 kV transmission line. A joint technical team will also investigate potential options for exporting up to 200 megawatts of electricity. This was agreed upon at the Energy Secretary-level Joint Steering Committee meeting on Saturday in Mount Abu, Rajasthan, India (18 February).

Several other important agreements on power trade were reached during the meeting, including expanding the power of existing, under-construction, and proposed transmission lines.

This was the first meeting between Nepal and India at the level of energy secretary since the formation of the Prachanda-led new government in December last year. Regardless of the change of guard in Kathmandu, Nepal-India power sector cooperation is expected to proceed smoothly.

Prime Minister Prachanda's first visit to India, which is still being worked out diplomatically, is expected to boost bilateral cooperation in the power sector.

During their meeting, the Indian side expressed interest in signing an inter-governmental agreement to export electricity generated by hydroelectric projects in Nepal to the Indian market.

To deepen cooperation in

the power sector, the two neighbors issued a long-term vision titled "India-Nepal Joint Vision Statement on Power Sector Cooperation" during former Prime Minister Deuba's official visit to India in April 2022.

According to Ghising, who attended the meeting, India, among other things, views Nepalese proposals to allow Nepalese electricity export to Bangladesh favorably and has requested that Nepal provide the name and details of the project for this trade. India agrees to consider export after NEA inspections to ensure compliance with cross-border directives. This is a very encouraging development.



He also stated that India has agreed to extend Nepalese electricity trade under the day-ahead competitive market of Indian Energy Exchange Limited (IX). Following the examination and review, India agreed to extend the agreement for another year, adding additional hydropower projects. He also stated that the Indian side had informed Nepal of its proposal to enter the real-time market. MD Ghising said that India has been supportive of Nepal's proposal for a long time.

He also acknowledged that India has agreed to allow a 132 kV single circuit Tanakpur-Mahendranagar transmission line for Nepalese electricity exports. The transmission line will be allowed to evacuate 70 MW of electricity from April to July and 80 MW from July to March, according to the agreement.

MD Ghising stated that this agreement allows for the export of surplus electricity generated in Sudur Pashchim's various districts. He also stated that India agreed to consider Nepal's proposal to export Nepalese electricity to India via 132 kV and a subsequent low capacity transmission line.

However, because such transition and transmission charges fall under the purview of the interstate system, it must consult the issue states.

Ghising also mentioned that India has agreed to support Nepal's solar power system and green hydrology.]

After wasting decades debating water resources, Nepal and India have recently made significant progress. The breakthrough made by Secretary Ghimire's team gives Nepal more space, potentially opening up a larger Indian market.

India Electricity trade aims to demonstrate to Nepalese citizens that India is a market for Nepalese electricity, with MD Ghising holding the opinion that this is yet another significant milestone in Nepal.

ADB Is Privileged To Be A Part Of Dhap Dam Reservoir



BY: ARNAUD CAUCHOIS

A very good morning to you all on this beautiful day here at Dhap Dam, I am extremely happy to see the Dhap Reservoir full of water in front of us, and the beautiful snow peaks in the distance. This truly reflects the natural beauty that adorns your country. And the Asian Development Bank is privileged to be one of the important development partners of Government of Nepal and Nepali people.

Some of you may know that before I came to Nepal as the country director, I was working in Nepal as a water resources specialist. It was during my time here then that I had the privilege of preparing the Bagmati River Basin Improvement Project, under which this Dhap Dam was built.

Looking back, it was in 2009, that the Government of Nepal, concerned with the degrading waterways of the Kathmandu Valley, endorsed the Bagmati Action Plan, adopting a vision of “a clean, green and healthy river system that is full of life and valued by all.” The Bagmati Action Plan provided a long list of interventions that collectively aimed to restore and conserve the river environment in the valley. Some of these interventions were already being implemented by the High Powered Committee for the Integrated Development of the Bagmati Civilization. But due to lack of financial and human resources, many of the planned interventions had not been implemented. ADB had already responded to the government’s requests to address the drinking water scarcity in Kathmandu Valley through several ADB-financed projects, one of them being Melamchi Water Supply Project. How-

ever, while these projects aimed to address the immediate human needs of drinking water, a gap remained to address the environment and culture priorities of the Holy Bagmati River which has been, and remains attached in the cycle of life of the denizens of this ancient, multi-ethnic and multi-cultural valley.

The policies and legislations related to water were also inadequate to address the emerging needs of an integrated water resources management approaches to govern Nepal’s rivers. Bagmati River suffered for a long time.



It was in this context of revitalizing the Bagmati River, that the vision for constructing Dhap Dam emerged. Dhap Dam would store water during the monsoon and release it during the dry season to augment the environmental flow of the Bagmati River. Along with this, the project incorporated a component to develop the river corridor as a green belt, and provide

recreational space for Kathmandu’s denizens. The project also piloted watershed management interventions within the Shivapuri Nagarjun National Park to reduce the pressure on the Bagmati watershed; rainwater harvesting to recharge the Kathmandu’s ground waters, and social mobilization for solid waste management. But, more importantly, ADB provided technical assistance to the Government of Nepal to strengthen its water resources policy and amend the water resources act, in the context of federalization. These institutional reforms aimed to establish River Basin Organizations (RBOs), and empower them to decide on eq-

uitable water sharing for the development, for the environment and for cultural needs.

Honorable ministers, the approval of the National Water Resources Bill, which would provide the legal basis for the establishment of RBOs has been significantly delayed. I urge you too look into this with urgency to ensure Nepal's water resources are managed in an equitable manner.

The contact for the construction of Dhap Dam, the first concrete-face rock fill dam in Nepal, was awarded to the consortium of Guan-jhou-Lama-Raman in 2105 under a designed-built modality, with a target to complete the construction within 24 months. Unfortunately, the project faced many startup delays, first to get clearance for the tree cutting followed by delays in submission of the detailed designs of the dam and many contractual disputes over the next 8 years. Perhaps we were all too optimistic to believe that we could build a dam on the top of a 2500 meter ridge in two years!

Despite many odds, I am delighted today to be here among you in the inauguration ceremony of this beautiful dam and a reserved filled with precious water! This marks the beginning of further pipelined projects, such as Nagmati Dam which would add another 440 liters per second of water into the Bagmati river throughout the dry season. I believe that the lessons learned from Dhap Dam will be very useful to all stakeholders to build Nagmati Dam more efficiently. I would like to thank the entire team behind this endeavor to seek this project materialize from a dream 10 years ago to reality today.

I would specially like to express my sincere gratitude to the PIU team of Department of Water Resources and Irrigation (DWRI), who led the construction of Dhap Dam; and to HPCIDBC, who coordinated the overall BRBIP Project as the central project management unit. Their support in ensuring that sufficient budget was allocated for the project was a major challenge every year, but we are here today, finally, with a completed dam filled with water. I would also like to thank the engineer's team for their support to the employer.



Last but not least, I would like to thank Raman construction for persevering through all odds, from construction disputes to the COVID-19 pandemic, to see that the project they took on to build, was indeed completed.

Honorable ministers and distinguished guests, I would like to emphasize again that the purpose of Dhap Dam was to augment that environmental flow of the Bag-

mati River, to serve the cultural value of Bagmati within the Kathmandu Valley. If water of this dam is not diverted to Bagmati River, the intended purpose of Dhap Dam will not be achieved. There is a need for the key stakeholders to discuss among themselves and agree on an amicable way forward, particular-

ly on allocation of water, especially when Nagmati Dam will be constructed. While doing so, I would like to request the key stakeholders to consider Bagmati River, its users, and denizens of the Kathmandu Valley.

In parting, honorable ministers, and distinguished guest, please allow me to express from heart, that I am humbled to see not only the natural beauty that your country offers, but more importantly for me, the deep cultural values that you still keep alive in your country. The rivers that flow through the Kathmandu Valley are adorned with historic monuments with deep cultural values. Your culture has a deep affinity to the rivers from birth, until death. The vision of the Bagmati Action Plan of a "clean, green and healthy river system, that is full of life and valued by all, truly embraces that value of your society. This project contributes to that vision. But for that vision to truly materialize, it will take your belief in it and your perseverance to achieve it collectively as the citizens of a new Nepal.

Arnaud Cauchaois is the County Director of the Asian Development Bank's Nepal Resident Mission.

Excerpt of the statement delivered at the inauguration ceremony program for the Dhap Dam construction work on February 16.

EU COMMISSIONER JUTTA URPILAINEN VISIT

Brief But Meaningful

Even though EU Commissioner for International Partnerships Jutta Urpilainen was only in Nepal for a little period—roughly 13 hours—she covers all of the crucial areas supported by the EU. Her meeting with the young members of the Youth Sounding Board is important since the country has a

By KESHABPOUDEL

“May the partnership between Europe and Nepal grow and flourish for the benefit of the people of Nepal and Europe!” tweets Jutta Urpilainen following the planting of a tree at the European Union Embassy in Lazimpat.

After crossing the European Alps, EU Commissioner for International Partnerships Jutta Urpilainen arrived at TIA early on February 8. White Himalayan picks greeted her upon her arrival in Kathmandu.

The visit of Urpilainen was brief but effective. She

met with Nepali authorities during her formal one-day visit, launched many EU initiatives in the green economy, education, health, and youth, and then left in the evening.

Engage, Empower, and Connect is Urpilainen’s message to the younger generation. Consider European Union #YouthActionPlan officially inaugurated in Nepal in the presence of @EUinNepal Youth Sounding Board, she wrote in a tweet after the meeting.

“They are putting the engage pillar into practice by

advising our delegation on how to make European Union actions in Nepal more relevant for youth,” tweets Urpilainen.

Her speech during the meeting with the Youth Sounding Board members was promising given that Nepal has a population that is over 50% young and that over 40% of local elected officials are young and, most crucially, women. The young people who attended the gathering posted about their experiences on social media.

Visit: A Success

From young people, and health workers to civil society members and higher government officials including President, Prime Minister, Foreign Minister, and Commissioner Urpilainen interacted with a wide section of Nepalese society.



Nepalese officials term the visit as highly successful.

“Nepal regarded the visit of a high-level delegation of the European Union (EU) led by EU Commissioner for International Partnerships Jutta Urpilainen as highly important. This visit provided us an opportunity to share our views and needs,” said

Sewa Lamsal, spokesperson of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. “The visit of Commissioner Urpilainen concluded on a positive note.”

According to Commissioner Urpilainen’s earlier statement, her visit was a success. “I am delighted to be visiting Nepal to strengthen our partnership and engage on matters of

common geopolitical interest, not least Russia’s war of aggression against Ukraine, which has had disastrous consequences for food security around the world, including in Nepal,” she said in a statement issued before her visit.

“I look forward to presenting our Global Gateway strategy, the EU’s positive offer

to partners to boost smart, clean and secure links in digital, energy and transport sectors and to strengthen health, education and research systems across the world.”

The visit of Commissioner Urpilainen comes at a critical juncture in Nepal’s preparations to exit the Least Developed Country (LDC) category in 2026, reaffirming the European Union’s strong and unwavering engagement with Nepal, including the recent launch of the Multiannual Indicative Program (MIP) for Nepal for 2021-2027.

Commissioner Urpilainen met with PadamGiri, Minister of Health and Population, at the Paropakar Maternity and Women’s Hospital to renew the EU’s commitment to the Government’s Multi-Sector Nutrition Program, which is supported by the EU, Germany, and UNICEF. This program will





continue improving maternal, adolescent, and child nutrition throughout Nepal.

Urpilainen also met with Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal Prachanda and Foreign Minister Bimala Rai Poudyal on a bilateral basis. She also paid a courtesy call to President Bidhya Devi Bhandari.

“I appreciate the warm welcome I have got in your beautiful country, @PresidentofNP Nepal has great potential. Europe is eager to deepen meaningful engagement through #GlobalGateway. In this tumultuous world, values-based partnerships between democracies increase in value.

Among other things, she announced a €50 million EU contribution to Nepal’s new education sector plan. This year marks 20 years of EU support for increasing access to education for both boys and girls, as well as a new era for improving education quality in Nepal.

Commissioner Urpilainen also met with representatives of civil society organizations, business leaders, and international financial institutions. She also met with members of the EU Youth Sounding Board, a consultative platform for Nepalese youth to influence EU action in Nepal, making it more relevant and effective for them.

Finally, Commissioner Urpilainen launched the Team Europe Initiative on Green Recovery with the ambassadors of EU Member States based in Nepal (France, Finland, and Germany), government representatives, development partners, and private sec-

tor and civil society representatives.

The Team Europe Initiative (TEI) on Green Recovery will assist Nepal in its efforts to recover from the pandemic and grow stronger and greener through more jobs, energy access, and increased societal resilience to shocks through better services in water supply, sanitation, nutrition, and education, while also encouraging increased participation of women in leadership and the economy. Since 2021, the EU and Member States have committed €200 million in grants for the TEI alone, intending to triple this amount in the coming years.

During her visit, she also met with USAID Administrator Samantha Power. “Crossed paths with @PowerUSAID who is also visiting Nepal! For European Union and the US is an important like-minded partners in change. We contribute to @G7 joint push to narrow the



global infrastructure investment gap, and work closely together in partner countries like Nepal,” tweeted JuttaUrpilainen. Twitter

Hectic Visit, Fruitful Meetings

Even though she had a

This agenda has the support of TeamEurope. The European Union, Finland, France, Germany, and the European Investment Bank Global have already committed €200 million. The fund is growing, and

energy agenda, announcing plans to reduce overall the use of fossil fuel-based energy like petrol and LPG, encouraging electric cooking and electric vehicles, the statement delivered by JuttaUrpilainen, EU Com-

missioner for International Partnerships, is critical for Nepal.

“We have a history of doing a lot together on soft infrastructure. With #GlobalGateway, we’re stepping up on hard infrastructure.

Despite the fact that her visit was only for one day, JuttaUrpilainen’s activities and remarks on Twitter demonstrated that her visit was highly successful in further strengthening Nepal-Europe relations.

She was very excited to travel to bustling Kathmandu, the capital of precious partner Nepal, in her tweets at TIA! Today, we will commemorate 20 years of education cooperation, focus on youth, and launch #GlobalGateway recovery efforts. To revitalize the economy and support upcoming LDC graduations.”

Following her arriv-

busy day attending various programs, she enjoyed interacting with children, youth, mothers in hospital beds, and civil society leaders.

Along with attending various programs, she also shared her impressions with the people of Nepal via Twitter. Her tweets demonstrated that she is inspired and pleased with Nepal’s performance.

“Nepal wants to develop its natural resources sustainably, giving priority to green growth and jobs,” she said in another tweet from the program.

we have concrete projects in the works.”

“#EUGreenDeal is a plan to green the economy. But it’s also a plan to harness the green and digital transition for new growth. With #GlobalGateway, we made the ambition global. And today, we launched #TeamEurope Green Recovery Initiative in Nepal! Multi-annual Indicative Program 2021-27 focuses on inclusive green growth, human capital, governance & civil society.”

At a time when Nepal has been pushing its green en-





al, she met with civil society leaders. “Great to start the day with civil society representatives who share the same conviction to protect vulnerable individuals and communities,” JuttaUrpilainen tweeted. “We discussed Nepali society’s challenges, human rights defenders’ support, migration issues, and social inclusion. “

As a country with a population of over 50% youth, Nepal’s prosperity and development are dependent on their participation, empowerment, and connection in Nepal’s various stages. “Engage, Empower, and Connect,” EU Commissioner JuttaUrpilainen tweeted. Consider the official launch of the Youth Action Plan in Nepal in the presence of the @EUin-Nepal Youth Sounding Board! They are

implementing the engage pillar by advising our delegation on how to make actions more relevant to youth.

Nepal has benefited greatly from EU assistance to improve educational quality over the last 20 years, and the EU’s new commitment encourages Nepal’s policymakers.

“EU gives its full support to Nepal’s new School Education Sector plan. In a diverse country like □□, local leadership is key in ensuring

#Quality Education for all. #TeamEurope provides €50M in resources and shares its expertise through our Quality Support for All initiative. Nepal and EU fight food insecurity together,” she tweeted. “Nepal has made impressive education strides: between 1998 and 2018, the literacy rate among people over 15 went 21% ➔68%! “Twitter

“EU has supported education for 20 years, and In Education, work continues backed by TeamEurope.” My key takeaway from the visit to this beautiful country of yours is simple: The European Union and Nepal will continue to grow stronger and flourish together.”





Plan, LDC graduation process and #SDGs.

With Prime Minister @PM_nepal, we discussed investments, development and stability. #GlobalGateway is a holistic offer enabling upscaling of skills, regulatory frameworks and standards.

“Congrats Minister @bimalarpFor your appointment, pleasure to exchange on the broad cooperation with TeamEurope! Recently a member of @UNPeacebuilding Commission, Nepal will soon chair the LDC Group. I look forward to enhancing cooperation in multilateral fora!” tweeted the commissioner.

A one-day visit to Nepal by JuttaUrpilainen, EU Commissioner for International Partnerships, has done remarkable things to strengthen ties between Nepal and the EU.

She went from school to Maternity Paropakar Hospital, where Nepal established a Human Milk Bank with EU assistance. “Human Milk Bank in Paropakar Maternity and Women’s Hospital is the result of life-saving #TeamEurope-Nepal- @unicefnepal cooperation. It has saved the lives of hundreds of premature babies. I heard some heartbreaking stories, but things improved here.”

She also paid a courtesy call on Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal ‘Prachanda’ and Foreign Minister Dr. Bimala Rai Paudyal, in addition to meeting with youth, school children, youth, and others.

“The PM received the EU Commissioner for International Partnerships, JuttaUrpilainen, at Singha Durbar today, according to the PMO Nepal. During the meeting, various issues concerning development cooperation and mutual interests were discussed,”

tweeted PMO Nepal. PMO Nepal

Nepal has made a conscious effort to improve its food security. However, significant fragilities and inequalities remain. These are made worse by disruptions in the global supply chains. Cooperation supports Nepal’s 15th Development



फागुपर्व सभ्य रुपमा मनाऔं ।

- आपसी सहमतिमा उल्लासपूर्वक फागुपर्व मनाऔं ।
- जबरजस्ती लोला हान्ने, पानी छ्याप्ने तथा रङ्ग दल्ने काम नगरौं ।
- सामाजिक तथा साँस्कृतिक मर्यादा र शिष्टाचारको पालना गरौं ।
- हानिकारक र रसायनयुक्त रङ्गको प्रयोग नगरौं ।
- मदिरा तथा लागु पदार्थको सेवन नगरौं ।
- गैरकानूनी र उच्छृङ्खल व्यवहार नगरौं ।

चाडपर्वलाई मौलिकरुपमा मनाऔं, सभ्य नागरिकको परिचय दिऔं ।

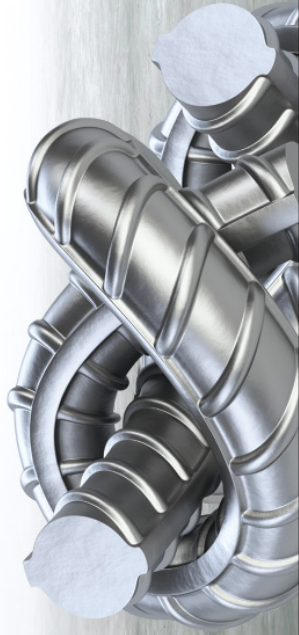


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